



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### **TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE March 6, 2009**

*Dr. J. Robert Galvin, M.D., M.P.H., M.B.A., Commissioner, (860) 509-7101*

### **Senate Bill 847 - An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Public Health**

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The Department of Public Health supports Senate Bill 847.

The Department has long advocated for the regionalization of local health departments and applauds the Governor in her effort to move the process of consolidation forward. Beginning in March 2005, DPH developed the "Transition Program" in order to increase public health services and emergency response capabilities of part time health departments by having municipalities join existing health districts or having groups of municipalities form new health districts.

From March 1, 2005 through March 1, 2009, 15 part time health departments have joined or formed a health district and 4 part time health departments have transitioned into full time departments. Also, 2 full time health departments have joined a health district. Nevertheless, while 93% of the state's population has access to full time public health and emergency services, 7% of the state's residents are left without full time access to the vital functions our local health agencies provide.

The Governor's proposal would require all municipalities complete the transition to full time regional health districts. Furthermore, this bill would encourage those municipalities already offering full time services to combine their resources with neighboring towns, giving them more options in how to invest funds in order to protect their residents.

In addition, the bill combines the existing loan repayment and loan assistance programs into one new comprehensive program. This will allow us to streamline the administration of these important initiatives. Furthermore, this provision also expands those eligible to receive payments to include individuals who teach in the field of healthcare education. This inclusion will help to address the shortage of health care educators in our state.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill and we urge you to take favorable action on this bill.

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